The Wanling Record of Chan Master Huangbo Duanji

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Minister Pei asked the Master, “Among the four or five hundred people in the mountains, how many have received the Master’s Dharma?”

The Master said, “Those who have received it are beyond number. Why? The Way is realized in the mind—how could it lie in words? Words are merely for instructing the unawakened.”

He asked, “What is the Buddha?”

The Master said, “This very mind is Buddha; no-mind is the Way. Simply do not give rise to such thoughts as birth and death, existence and nonexistence, long and short, self and other, subject and object. Mind itself is Buddha, and Buddha itself is mind. Mind is like empty space. Therefore it is said: ‘The Buddha’s true Dharma body is like empty space.’ There is no need to seek elsewhere; all seeking is suffering. Even if, throughout kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, one practiced the six perfections and the myriad practices and attained the Buddha’s bodhi, it would still not be ultimate. Why? Because it belongs to conditioned creation; when conditions are exhausted, it returns to impermanence. Therefore it is said: The sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya are not the true Buddha, nor are they the one who teaches the Dharma. Simply recognize your own mind: without self or others, it is originally Buddha.”

He asked, “If sages are Buddha through no-mind, then when ordinary beings have no mind, do they not sink into empty quiescence?”

The Master said, “In Dharma there are no ordinary beings or sages, nor is there sinking into quiescence. Dharma is fundamentally not existent, so do not form a

view of nonexistence. Dharma is fundamentally not nonexistent, so do not form a view of existence. Existence and nonexistence are both emotional views, like illusory eye defects. Therefore it is said: 'Seeing and hearing are like illusory eye defects; knowing and perceiving belong to sentient beings.' In the gate of the patriarchs, we speak only of bringing activity to rest and forgetting views. When activity is forgotten, the Buddha Way flourishes; when discrimination arises, Māra's armies blaze."

He asked, "Since mind is originally Buddha, must one still practice the six perfections and the myriad practices?"

The Master said, "Awakening lies in the mind; it has nothing to do with the six perfections and the myriad practices. The six perfections and the myriad practices are all expedient teachings for engaging with beings and liberating them. Even bodhi, suchness, ultimate reality, liberation, and the dharmakāya, up to and including the tenth bhūmi and the four fruits of the noble stages, are all gateways for liberation; they have nothing to do with the Buddha-mind. Mind itself is Buddha. Therefore, among all gateways of liberation, the Buddha-mind is foremost."

Simply do not give rise to such minds as birth and death and afflictions, and there will be no need for such dharmas as bodhi. Therefore it is said: "The Buddha taught all dharmas in order to liberate all my minds. When I have no mind at all, what need have I for all dharmas?" From Buddha to patriarch, they discussed no other matter, but only the One Mind, also called the One Vehicle. Therefore, seek throughout the ten directions, and there is no other vehicle. This teaching has no branches or leaves; it contains only the true reality.

For this reason, this meaning is difficult to believe. When Bodhidharma came to this land, in the two kingdoms of Liang and Wei there was only Great Master Huike, who secretly trusted in his own mind. Upon hearing the words, he immediately understood that this very mind is Buddha: body and mind alike are nonexistent. This is called the Great Way. The Great Way is originally equal. Therefore, deeply trust that all living beings share the one true nature. Mind and intrinsic nature are not different: intrinsic nature is mind, and mind is intrinsic nature. Thus one is called a patriarch. Therefore it is said: "When one recognizes the nature of mind, one may speak of the inconceivable."

He asked, "Does the Buddha liberate sentient beings?"

The Master said, "In truth, there are no sentient beings whom the Tathāgata liberates. Even 'I' cannot be obtained; how could what is not I be obtained? Buddha and sentient beings are both unobtainable."

He said, “There are now the thirty-two marks and the liberation of sentient beings. How can you say there is nothing?”

The Master said, “All appearances are false. If one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata. Buddha and sentient beings are entirely your deluded views. It is only because you do not recognize your original mind that you vainly produce interpretations. The moment you form a view of Buddha, you are obstructed by Buddha. If you form a view of sentient beings, you are obstructed by sentient beings. If you form views of ordinary and sage, pure and impure, and so forth, they all become obstructions. Because they obstruct your mind, they all become the cycle of rebirth—like a monkey letting go of one thing only to seize another, with no time of rest.”

Since learning is all of one kind, you must directly enter no-learning: no ordinary, no sage; no purity, no defilement; no great, no small; no defiled, no unconditioned. In this One Mind, diligently adorn it with skillful means. Even if you have learned all the views of the three vehicles and the twelve divisions of the teachings, you must relinquish them all. Thus, cast away everything, leaving only a bed on which to lie ill. Simply do not give rise to any views. When not a single dharma can be obtained and one is not obstructed by dharmas, one passes beyond the realms of ordinary beings and sages in the three realms. Only then may one be called a world-transcending Buddha.”

Therefore it is said: “I bow to that which, like empty space, relies on nothing and surpasses the non-Buddhist paths.” Since mind is not different, Dharma too is not different. Since mind is non-contrived, Dharma too is non-contrived. All phenomena are transformed by mind. Thus, because my mind is empty, all dharmas are empty. The thousand grades and myriad kinds are all alike; throughout the empty realms of the ten directions, there is but one substance of mind. Mind is fundamentally not different, and Dharma too is not different. It is only because your views differ that distinctions arise.”

For example, when the devas eat from the same jeweled vessel, the color of the food differs according to their merit and virtue. In truth, the Buddhas of the ten directions obtain not the slightest dharma; this is called anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi. It is simply the One Mind. In truth, it has no different appearances, no radiance, and no victory or defeat. Since there is no victory, there is no appearance of Buddha; since there is no defeat, there is no appearance of sentient beings.”

He said, “Since mind is without appearance, how could it entirely lack the thirty-two marks and eighty excellent characteristics for transforming and liberating sentient beings?”

The Master said, “The thirty-two marks belong to appearance; all appearances are false. The eighty excellent characteristics belong to form. If one sees me by form, that person follows a wrong path and cannot see the Tathāgata.”

He asked, “Are Buddha-nature and the nature of sentient beings the same or different?”

The Master said, “Intrinsic nature has neither sameness nor difference. According to the teachings of the three vehicles, one speaks of Buddha-nature and the nature of sentient beings; thus there are the causes and effects of the three vehicles, and so there is sameness and difference. But according to the Buddha Vehicle and the transmission of the patriarchs, such matters are not discussed. They point only to the One Mind: neither the same nor different, neither cause nor effect. Therefore it is said: ‘There is only this One Vehicle Way, with neither a second nor a third, except where the Buddha speaks through skillful means.’”

He asked, “Why does the Bodhisattva Boundless Body not see the crown-mark of the Tathāgata?”

The Master said, “In truth, there is nothing to see. Why? The Bodhisattva Boundless Body is the Tathāgata himself; he should not see anything further.”

I only teach you not to form a view of Buddha, so that you do not fall on the side of Buddha; not to form a view of sentient beings, so that you do not fall on the side of sentient beings; not to form a view of existence, so that you do not fall on the side of existence; not to form a view of nonexistence, so that you do not fall on the side of nonexistence; not to form a view of ordinary beings, so that you do not fall on the side of ordinary beings; and not to form a view of sages, so that you do not fall on the side of sages. Simply be without all views: this is the Boundless Body. Wherever there is a view, it is called a non-Buddhist path. Those of non-Buddhist paths delight in all views.”

A bodhisattva remains unmoved amid all views. Tathāgata means the suchness of all dharmas. Therefore it is said: “Maitreya is thus, and all noble sages are thus.” Thusness is no arising; thusness is no ceasing; thusness is no seeing; thusness is no hearing. The crown of the Tathāgata is perfect seeing, yet there is no perfect seeing. Therefore one does not fall on the side of perfection. Thus the Buddha-body is non-contrived and does not fall within any category. Provisionally, empty space is used as an analogy: perfectly identical with vast empty space, lacking nothing and having nothing superfluous, at ease and without affairs.”

Do not forcefully argue about others’ realms. Once you argue, it becomes consciousness. Therefore it is said: “Perfected reality sinks into the sea of consciousness, drifting and turning like floating tumbleweed.” You merely say, “I

know; I have learned; I have realized in accord; I have attained liberation; I have reasons." Where you are strong, things accord with your wishes; where you are weak, they do not. What use are views like these? I tell you: be at ease and without affairs. Do not vainly employ the mind. You need not seek truth; you need only cease from views."

Thus inward views and outward views are both mistaken; the Buddha Way and Māra's way are both evil. Thus, when Mañjuśrī temporarily gave rise to the two views, he was banished to the two Iron Enclosing Mountains. Mañjuśrī represents actual wisdom, while Samantabhadra represents provisional wisdom. Provisional and actual wisdom counterbalance each other, yet ultimately there is neither provisional nor actual wisdom—there is only the One Mind. Mind is neither Buddha nor sentient being, and has no differentiated view. The moment there is a view of Buddha, it becomes a view of sentient beings. Views of existence and nonexistence, eternalism and annihilationism, become the two Iron Enclosing Mountains, because one is obstructed by views."

The patriarchs directly pointed to the original mind of all sentient beings: its original substance is originally Buddha. It does not depend on cultivation for its accomplishment, does not belong to gradual stages, and is neither bright nor dark. Since it is not bright, there is no ignorance; since it is not dark, there is no absence of ignorance. Thus there is no ignorance, nor is there an ending of ignorance."

Upon entering the gate of my school, you must be especially attentive. To see in this way is called Dharma; because one sees Dharma, one is called Buddha; when Buddha and Dharma are both absent, one is called saṅgha. This is called the non-contrived saṅgha, also called the Three Jewels of one substance. Those who seek Dharma do not seek attached to Buddha, do not seek attached to Dharma, and do not seek attached to saṅgha. They should have nothing to seek. Not seeking attached to Buddha, there is no Buddha; not seeking attached to Dharma, there is no Dharma; not seeking attached to saṅgha, there is no saṅgha."

He asked, "The Master is now teaching the Dharma. How then can you say that there is no saṅgha and no Dharma?"

The Master said, "If you see a Dharma that can be taught, then you are seeking me through sound. If you see an 'I,' then you are seeking through location. Dharma is also no-Dharma; Dharma is mind itself. Therefore the patriarch said: 'When this mind-Dharma was transmitted, when was any dharma ever a dharma?' When there is no Dharma and no original mind, only then does one understand the Dharma of mind after mind. In truth, not a single dharma can be obtained; this is called sitting at the place of awakening. The place of awakening is simply not giving rise to any views. Awaken to the fundamental emptiness of Dharma; this is called the empty

Tathāgata-garbha. Originally there is not a single thing—where could dust arise? If you attain the meaning of this, what is there to discuss in carefree ease?"

He asked, "Originally there is not a single thing. Does that mean that there is no thing at all?"

The Master said, "No is not it either. Bodhi has no 'is,' nor does it have the understanding of 'no.'"

He asked, "What is Buddha?"

The Master said, "Your mind is Buddha, and Buddha is mind. Mind and Buddha are not different. Therefore it is said: 'This very mind is Buddha.' Apart from mind, there is no other Buddha."

He said, "If one's own mind is Buddha, what did the patriarch transmit when he came from the West?"

The Master said, "When the patriarch came from the West, he transmitted only the Buddha-mind. He directly pointed out that your minds are originally Buddha, and that mind and mind are not different; therefore he is called a patriarch. If you directly see this meaning, you immediately transcend all stages of the three vehicles. You are originally Buddha; it does not depend on cultivation for its accomplishment."

He said, "If so, what Dharma did the Buddhas of the ten directions teach when they appeared in the world?"

The Master said, "When the Buddhas of the ten directions appear in the world, they teach only the Dharma of the One Mind. Thus the Buddha secretly entrusted Mahākāśyapa with this substance of the One Mind, which fills empty space and pervades the dharma realm. It is called the principle of all Buddhas. How could you understand this Dharma through words and phrases? Nor can you see it in a single faculty or a single circumstance. This meaning can be attained only through silent accord. This gate is called the Dharma gate of non-contrivance. If you wish to understand it, simply know no-mind; suddenly awaken, and you attain it. If you use mind to try to learn and grasp it, you turn ever farther away. Only when there is no mind that follows divergent paths, no mind of grasping and rejecting, and the mind is like wood or stone, do you have some share in learning the Way."

He said, "Now there are clearly all kinds of deluded thoughts. How can you speak of no-mind?"

The Master said, "Delusion is originally without substance; it arises from your own mind. If you recognize that mind is Buddha, mind is originally without delusion. How then could you stir the mind and further take delusion to be real? If you do not give

rise to thoughts, delusion naturally does not exist. Therefore it is said: 'When mind arises, the various dharmas arise; when mind ceases, the various dharmas cease.'"

He said, "Just when a deluded thought arises, where is Buddha?"

The Master said, "When you are aware that delusion has arisen, that very awareness is Buddha. If there were no deluded thoughts within it, Buddha too would not exist. Why is this so? Because when you stir the mind to form a view of Buddha, you suppose that there is a Buddha to be attained. When you form a view of sentient beings, you suppose that there are sentient beings to be liberated. Every stirring of mind and every thought is your own view. If there are no views at all, where could Buddha abide? Just as when Mañjuśrī gave rise to a view of Buddha, he was banished to the two Iron Enclosing Mountains."

He said, "Just at the moment of awakening, where is Buddha?"

The Master said: "Where does questioning come from? Where does awakening arise? Speech and silence, movement and stillness—all sounds and forms are Buddha-activities. Where, then, do you seek the Buddha? Do not put another head on top of your head or add another mouth to your mouth! Simply do not give rise to divergent views: mountains are mountains, water is water, monastics are monastics, and laypeople are laypeople. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, and stars all do not lie outside your mind. The three thousand worlds are wholly your very self. Where could there be so many different things? Outside the mind there is no dharma; before your eyes are mountains green."

Within empty space and the world, there is not the slightest hair's breadth that could provide you with something on which to form a view. Therefore, all sounds and forms are the Buddha's wisdom-eye. Dharmas do not arise independently; they arise only in reliance on conditions. Because of things, the many forms of wisdom exist. All day long one speaks—when has one ever spoken? All day long one hears—when has one ever heard? Thus Śākyamuni spoke for forty-nine years, yet never uttered a single word."

Someone asked: "If that is so, where is bodhi?"

The Master said: "Bodhi has no such place. The Buddha does not attain bodhi, nor do sentient beings lose bodhi. It cannot be attained through the body, nor sought with the mind. All sentient beings are themselves the mark of bodhi."

Someone asked: "How does one arouse bodhicitta?"

The Master said: "Bodhi cannot be obtained. You need only now arouse the mind that seeks nothing obtainable, firmly knowing that not a single dharma can be attained; this is bodhicitta. Bodhi has no abiding place; therefore there is no one

who attains it. Thus it is said: 'When I was with Dīpaṃkara Buddha, there was not the slightest dharma I could attain; thereupon the Buddha gave me a prediction.' Clearly know that all sentient beings are originally bodhi and should not seek to attain bodhi anew. When you hear of arousing bodhicitta, you imagine that there is some mind that must study and acquire Buddhahood, intending only to become a Buddha. Even if you cultivate for three asaṃkhyeya kalpas, you will attain only a sambhogakāya or nirmāṇakāya Buddha. What connection does that have with the Buddha of your own original true nature? Thus it is said: 'To seek a Buddha with marks outside yourself is unlike you.'"

Someone asked: "If one is originally a Buddha, how can there still be the four modes of birth and the six realms, with their many differing forms and appearances?"

The Master said: "The essence of all Buddhas is perfect and complete, with neither increase nor decrease. Flowing into the six realms, it is complete everywhere; among the myriad kinds of beings, each and every one is a Buddha. It is like a lump of mercury: scattered in various places, every globule is round and complete; before being divided, it is simply one mass. This one is all, and all are one. The various forms and appearances are like houses: leaving the house of a donkey and entering the house of a human, leaving the human body and reaching the body of a deva, even entering the houses of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. These distinctions arise from your choosing and rejecting. How could the nature of the original source contain distinctions?"

Someone asked: "How do the Buddhas practice great compassion and teach the Dharma for sentient beings?"

The Master said: "The Buddha's compassion is without conditions; therefore it is called great compassion. Compassion means not seeing any Buddha to be attained; sorrow means not seeing any sentient being to be liberated. The Dharma they teach is without teaching or showing; those who hear the Dharma neither hear nor obtain anything. It is like an illusionist teaching Dharma to illusory people. If you take this Dharma to mean that I have understood and awakened from the words of a spiritual teacher, or if you take this compassion to mean that you can form thoughts and learn another's views, then you have not awakened to your own original mind. In the end, it is of no benefit."

Someone asked: "What is diligence?"

The Master said: "When neither body nor mind arises, this is called the foremost firm and vigorous diligence. As soon as the mind arises to seek outside, it is like King Kali going out in delight to hunt; when the mind does not roam outside, it is the patient ascetic. When both body and mind are absent, this is the Buddha Way."

Someone asked: “If one practices this Way with no mind, can one attain it?”

The Master said: “No mind itself is the practice of this Way. Why speak further of attainment or nonattainment? The moment a single thought suddenly arises, it becomes an object. If not a single thought arises, then the mind’s delusions about objects extinguish themselves and can no longer be pursued.”

Someone asked: “How does one leave the three realms?”

The Master said: “Do not think of either good or evil; right where you are, you leave the three realms. The Tathāgata appeared in the world to break through the three existences. If there is no mind at all, the three realms are not existent either. Suppose a single mote of dust is broken into one hundred parts: ninety-nine parts are nonexistent and one part exists; the Mahāyāna cannot yet transcend it. Only when all one hundred parts are nonexistent can the Mahāyāna truly transcend it.”

The Master addressed the assembly: “This very mind is Buddha. From the Buddhas above down to creeping creatures endowed with awareness, all possess Buddha-nature and share one mind-essence. Therefore, when Bodhidharma came from India, he transmitted only the Dharma of one mind, directly pointing out that all sentient beings are originally Buddhas. There is no need for cultivation; simply recognize your own mind now, see your own true nature, and seek no further elsewhere.”

How does one recognize one’s own mind? The very one speaking now is your mind! When there is no speech and no activity, the mind-essence resembles empty space: it has no form or appearance, no location, and is not simply nonexistent, for it exists yet cannot be seen. A patriarch said: “The treasury of the mind-ground of true nature has neither head nor tail. Responding to conditions, it transforms beings; provisionally it is called wisdom. When it does not respond to conditions, one cannot say that it exists or does not exist. Even when it is responding, it leaves no trace.” Since you know this, simply abide now within no-thingness; this is to walk the path of the Buddhas.”

The sūtra says: “Give rise to that mind while abiding nowhere.” All sentient beings revolve in birth and death because the mind follows its objects and runs about, never ceasing in the six realms, thereby undergoing all kinds of suffering. Vimalakīrti said: “People difficult to transform have minds like monkeys.” Therefore, various methods are used to restrain their minds, and only then are they tamed.”

Therefore, when the mind arises, the myriad dharmas arise; when the mind ceases, the myriad dharmas cease. Thus know that all dharmas are created by the mind, including humans, devas, hell beings, the six realms, and asuras.”

Now simply learn no mind, abruptly cease all conditions, and do not give rise to deluded thoughts or discrimination. There is no person and no self; no greed or anger, no aversion or attachment, no victory or defeat. Simply remove these many kinds of deluded thoughts, and your nature is inherently pure. This is the cultivation of bodhi, Dharma, and Buddhahood."

If you do not understand this meaning, then even if you study extensively, practice diligently and painfully, eat wood and wear grass, yet fail to recognize your own mind, all of this is called deviant practice. You become celestial māras, non-Buddhists, and spirits of water and land. What benefit could there be in practicing this way? Master Zhigong said: "Before encountering an enlightened teacher who has appeared in the world, one takes the medicine of the Mahāyāna Dharma in vain." Now simply recognize your own mind and cease discursive thought. Deluded thoughts and the toil of dust-like afflictions will naturally not arise. Vimalakīrti said: "Set out only one bed, and lie down sick." It means that the mind does not arise. When a sick person lies down, all grasping at conditions ceases; when deluded thoughts rest and vanish, that is bodhi."

If your mind is now confused and unsettled, then even if you study through the three vehicles, the four fruits, the ten bhūmis, and all their stages, in the end you merely remain seated among ordinary beings and sages."

All conditioned practices return to impermanence, and all powers have a time when they are exhausted. They are like an arrow shot into the sky: when its force is spent, it falls back down, returning to the round of birth and death. To practice in this way without understanding the Buddha's intent is to suffer hardship in vain. Is this not a great error? Master Zhigong said: "Without encountering an enlightened teacher who has appeared in the world, one takes the medicine of the Mahāyāna Dharma in vain."

Now, at all times—in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down—simply learn no mind. Have no discrimination, no reliance, and no attachment. All day long, let things proceed freely and naturally, like a fool whom worldly people wholly fail to recognize. Nor need you make others recognize or fail to recognize you. Let your mind be like a hard stone, entirely without cracks or crevices: no dharma can penetrate your mind. Remain utterly unattached. Only then is there a small measure of correspondence."

To penetrate beyond the realm of the three realms is called a Buddha's appearance in the world. To leave no traces of mental appearances is called undefiled wisdom. Do not create karma for the human or deva realms; do not create karma for the hell realms. Do not give rise to any mind, and all conditions will cease to arise. This very body and mind then belong to one who is free. It is not that one never takes birth at

all, but that one is born freely according to one's intent. This is what the sūtra means by a bodhisattva's mind-born body."

If you have not yet understood no mind and act while attached to marks, all such acts belong to the karma of māras. Even performing Buddhist rites for the Pure Land becomes karma; it is then called an obstacle of Buddhahood, because it obstructs your mind. Bound by cause and effect, you have no freedom in going or staying."

Therefore, dharmas such as bodhi are fundamentally not existent. Everything the Tathāgata taught was for transforming people, like using yellow leaves as gold merely to stop a child from crying. In truth, there is no dharma called unsurpassed perfect awakening. Now that you understand this meaning, why exert yourself over trifles? Simply accord with conditions and dissolve old karma; do not create new misfortune. Since your mind is clear, all your former views must be relinquished. Vimalakīrti said: "Remove everything that is possessed."

The Lotus Sūtra says: "For twenty years he constantly had them remove excrement." This simply means removing the place in the mind where views are fabricated. It also says: "Remove the excrement of frivolous discourse." Thus the Tathāgata-garbha is originally empty and quiescent, retaining not a single dharma. Therefore the sūtra says: "The lands of all Buddhas are likewise entirely empty."

If you say that the Buddha Way is attained through study and cultivation, such a view has no connection with it at all! Perhaps you make some gesture, raise your eyebrows or move your eyes in response to a particular occasion, and then claim that you have accorded with it, realized it, and awakened to the principle of Chan. But when you meet someone who does not understand, you say that they know nothing at all. If you can prevail over them in reasoning, you rejoice inwardly; if they refute you and you cannot match them, your heart becomes dejected. What connection does this mentality have with studying Chan? Even if you understand a little principle, you gain only a dharma belonging to the mind; it has no connection at all with the Way of Chan. Therefore Bodhidharma faced the wall, never allowing people to establish views."

Thus it is said: "Forgetting contrivance is the Buddha Way; discrimination is the realm of māras."

Even when you are deluded, this nature is not lost; even when you awaken, it is not gained. The naturally genuine self-nature has never possessed delusion or awakening. The entirety of the ten-direction realm of empty space is originally the substance of my one mind. However you move, function, or act, how could you depart from empty space? Empty space has originally no great or small, no defiled or undefiled, no delusion or awakening. Clearly seeing, there is not a single thing—not a person, not a Buddha. Beyond the slightest measure, without reliance or

attachment, it is one clear stream: the patience with the non-arising of dharmas of self-nature. What is there to deliberate over? The true Buddha has no mouth and cannot teach the Dharma; true hearing has no ears—who, then, hears? Take care!"

One day, the Master ascended the seat and instructed the assembly:

"If you have not thoroughly broken through beforehand, when the night of the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month arrives, you will surely be thrown into frantic confusion. There are some non-Buddhists who, on seeing someone practice, sneer coldly: 'There is still that thing there.' But I ask you: when the moment of death suddenly comes, what will you use to withstand birth and death? Consider it carefully! There is a principle here. How could one be Maitreya by nature and Śākyamuni without effort?"

"There are idle spirits and wild ghosts who, as soon as they see someone slightly ill, tell them: 'Just let it go.' Yet when they themselves become ill, they cannot resolve it; their hands and feet flail about in confusion. When your flesh is sliced apart like a sharp knife cutting it, you will be unable to remain master of yourself. One must settle all matters in leisure, so that they can be used in times of urgency; how much effort this saves. Do not wait until you are thirsty to dig a well, when you cannot manage what must be done and the scene is in complete disarray!"

"How will you avoid the darkness of the road ahead? You blindly rush about at random—how bitter, how bitter! In ordinary times you merely cultivate verbal samādhi, speak of Chan and discourse on the Way, shout at Buddhas and curse the patriarchs; when you reach this point, none of it is of any use. In ordinary times you only deceive others—how could you know that today you have deceived yourself? In the Avīci hell, you will certainly not be released! Now that the Dharma-ending age is sinking away, everything depends on genuine strength."

"Brothers, take up the burden of continuing the Buddha's wisdom-life; do not let it be cut off! Nowadays, when there are even one or two wandering practitioners, they merely go to look at mountains and scenery, not knowing how much time remains. When a single breath does not return, it is already another life; what face you will then have is unknown. Alas! I urge you, brothers: while your physical strength is sound, attain a clear resolution of this great matter, so that you will not be deceived by others."

The key to this barrier is very easy to grasp. It is simply that you are unwilling to make a death-defying resolve and apply yourselves to the work. You keep saying that it is difficult—difficult indeed. Let me tell you: how could it grow of itself on a tree? If you want it, you must make a turnabout yourselves. If you are a true man of resolve, take up a koan. A monk asked Zhaozhou, "Does a dog have Buddha-nature or not?" Zhaozhou replied, "No."

Simply investigate the word “No” throughout the twenty-four hours of the day. Investigate it by day and investigate it by night; investigate it while walking, standing, sitting, and lying down; while dressing and eating, while defecating and urinating. Attend to it in every thought. Vigorously summon your whole spirit and hold fast to the word “No.” As the days and months deepen, it will become continuous and undivided. Suddenly, the flower of the mind will burst open, and you will awaken to the pivotal point of the Buddhas and patriarchs. The World-Honored One’s holding up a flower will then seem a complete failure. At that point, why speak of Yama, the King of Death? Even a thousand sages will be unable to do anything to you. If you do not believe it, there truly is such wonder. Why is this so? Nothing can withstand one who is determined.

Verse:

To break free completely from the toils of the world is no ordinary matter;

Hold tightly to the rope’s end and make a determined effort.

Without enduring cold that pierces to the bone,

How can one obtain the fragrance of plum blossoms that fills the nostrils?

Dedication Verse

May this merit and virtue extend universally to all.

May we and all sentient beings together accomplish the Buddha Way.